



File Code: 1950

Date: March 14, 2018

Dear Planning Participant,

Thank you for your continued interest in the Mission Restoration Project on the Methow Valley Ranger District. The landscapes included in this project are part of the core of the Methow Valley Ranger District. Restoration and maintenance work is needed to ensure that wildlife habitat is resilient, stand conditions that allow for effective and safe firefighting are created in the wildland urban interface and stream function and water quality is sufficient to sustain healthy populations of aquatic species.

With this letter, I am making the final Environmental Assessment, Draft Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Mission Restoration Project available for review. The 45 day objection period will start with the publication of a legal notice for this project in the newspaper of record, The Wenatchee World, as described below.

The Mission landscape restoration treatments would have a 10,220 acre footprint. These treatments include commercial harvest of trees, pre-commercial thinning small diameter trees, aspen release, fuels treatment and prescribed landscape burning. In addition, a variety of aquatic restoration projects are a key component of restoring the Buttermilk Creek and Libby Creek watersheds. These projects include restoration of compacted soils, replacement of undersized culverts with larger culverts or hardened fords, beaver habitat enhancement, large wood enhancement within fish-bearing stream channels, and rock armoring of roads at stream crossings. The third major component of the Mission Restoration Project is to manage the transportation system for safe and efficient travel, administration, public use and protection of National Forest System Lands for now and in the future. This includes replacing an unsafe bridge, closing open system roads, decommissioning system and unauthorized roads, and adopting some unauthorized roads into the forest road system.

The collaborative effort to develop the Mission Restoration Project began in 2016. Since that time, there have been meetings and opportunities to comment. Using the information gathered during meetings, scoping, and field surveys, the interdisciplinary team developed and analyzed effects of two action alternatives as well as the effects of taking no action. A preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA) was made available for review in February 2017. A revised preliminary EA was published in June 2017 that better addressed the effects of the proposed project specific Forest Plan Amendment. Comments on both versions of the draft EA were considered by the interdisciplinary team and, where appropriate, changes were made. In addition, boundary and prescription changes were made based on ongoing field reconnaissance.

This final Environmental Assessment, draft Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) document the analysis and are the culmination of that work. The action



alternatives are designed to move the vegetation closer to the historic and future range of variability; building stand resiliency to insects, disease and fire; and to reduce the impacts of the transportation system on aquatic resources. While there would be short-term impacts during, or immediately following treatment activities, to resources including aquatics, air quality, invasive plants, wildlife, and recreation, the long term impacts to resources were found to be beneficial in nature.

Document Availability:

The final Environmental Assessment, draft Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) are available at:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=49201>

The Environmental Assessment, Decision Notice and FONSI, and supporting documents are available for inspection during regular business hours (Monday through Friday, 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Methow Valley Ranger District (please call ahead to schedule an appointment).

Opportunity to Object:

This decision is subject to the pre-decisional review process pursuant to 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B. During the objection period, only those individuals or organizations that submitted specific written comments during the designated opportunities for public participation may object (36 CFR 218.5). Objections must meet the requirements of 36 CFR 218.8(d); incorporation of documents by reference is permitted only as provided for at 36 CFR 218.8(b).

An objection must include a description of those aspects of the proposed project addressed by the objection, including specific issues related to the proposed project; if applicable, how the objector believes the environmental analysis or draft decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy; suggested remedies that will resolve the objection; supporting reasons for the reviewing office to consider; and a statement that demonstrates the connection between prior written comments on the particular proposed project or activity and the content of the objection, unless the objection concerns an issue that arose after the designated opportunities for comment. Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted specific comments to the proposed project or activity. Comments received during this review process will be considered, and a revised (if necessary) Environmental Assessment and Decision Notice/FONSI will be prepared.

How to File an Objection

The publication date of the legal notice in the Wenatchee World, the newspaper of record for this project, is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection and those wishing to object should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. Regulations prohibit extending the length of the objection period. The opportunity to object ends 45 days following publication of the legal notice in the paper of record (The Wenatchee World).

The objection, including attachments, must be filed (regular mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, express delivery, or messenger service) with the reviewing officer within 45 days of the legal notice at: Regional Forester, Attention: 1570 OBJECTIONS, Pacific Northwest Region, P. O. Box 3623, Portland, OR 97208 (US Mail) [or for physical delivery: 1220 SW 3rd Avenue, Portland, OR 97204], FAX #503-808-2339 or submitted electronically at <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?Project=49201>. Hand deliveries must be made between 8:00AM and 4:30 PM Monday through Friday, except legal holidays.

Electronic objections must be submitted only to the web address shown above.

It is the responsibility of all individuals and organizations to ensure their objections are received in a timely manner as described in 36 CFR 218.9. For electronically submitted objections, the sender should normally receive an automated acknowledgement of the receipt of the objection. It is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means. Objections delivered by mail must be received before the close of the fifth business day after the objection filing period

In cases where no identifiable name is attached to an objection, a verification of identify will be required for objection eligibility. If using an electronic message, a scanned signature is one way to provide verification.

Please be aware that all comments, names, addresses, and phone numbers become part of the project record and are subject to release if a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request is received.

Timing of Project Decision and Implementation

The Reviewing Officer shall issue a written response to all Objections within 45 days following the end of this objection-filing period (218.10). When all objections have been responded to in writing, the Responsible Official may make a final decision on the proposed project.

Contact Information

For further information regarding the project, please contact Team Leader Paul Nash at 509-996-4008.

Thank you for your continued involvement in caring for your National Forest System lands.

Sincerely,



MICHAEL C. LIU
District Ranger